

Secret

Saturday, November 22, 1958
6:30 p.m.

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT

On Saturday, November 22, at 6:30 p.m., I called the President to get his approval to a suggested note to the Russians, copy attached, which we hoped to coordinate with the British and French so that similar notes from the three powers could be delivered in Moscow on Monday morning, November 24.

I explained to the President that there had been numerous press speculations in regard to a split among the three powers. In addition, Chancellor Adenauer had written a letter to DeGaulle and to Macmillan and to the Secretary of State which outlined, though in reasonably moderate terms, his own anxiety in regard to the situation and which, in the case of Macmillan, asked the latter to send a personal message to Khrushchev requesting him to hold off on his proposed unilateral action in Berlin.

I read to the President the message which Macmillan had sent to Adenauer and explained that this had been sent without consultation because Macmillan felt that the time element was important, and that I also felt this had been done with the possible view of counteracting the impression that the British were somewhat wobbly in the whole situation as reflected in a lower level statement of British views which had been circulated to the three powers and Germany.

I then told the President that neither we nor our Allies had received any message from the Russians and that our knowledge of projected acts came entirely from press reports and Adenauer's conference with the Russian Ambassador in Bonn. For that reason, it occurred to us that we might take the initiative both in showing solidarity and in getting our views with respect to Russian responsibility with regard to the Quadripartite Agreements affecting Berlin out publicly before any Russian note was received by us. I then read him the text of the suggested note, and he approved it with the understanding that we would plan to coordinate it at once with the British and French.

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His final comment with respect to the Berlin situation was that he had been thinking about it for the last few days and that his then instinct was to make a very simple statement to the effect that if the Russians want war over the Berlin issue, they can have it. However, in a lighter vein, he said he would certainly hold off any such statement awaiting further developments.



Christian A. Herter

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